

# U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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May 1, 2021

Dear Fellow Marylander:

What a difference 100 days makes. America is back on track and it feels pretty good.

In Maryland, nearly 2 million of us are fully vaccinated. Nationwide, that number is over [100 million](#). More than half of all adults in the U.S. have gotten one shot and two-thirds of seniors are fully vaccinated. Daily deaths have dropped 75 percent since January 20.

As I sat in the [Capitol](#) on Wednesday night listening to President Joe Biden deliver his first address to a joint session of Congress, it was breathtaking to hear the aggressive, positive steps being taken by our federal government to further control the COVID-19 pandemic. Practically each day, Team Maryland is able to announce [new resources](#) available to our state that help individuals and families, small businesses and local communities, and especially health care providers, get us through this public health crisis, and the resulting economic turmoil.

President Biden was clear that there is still much work to be done, but that America can meet this challenge, and every other, if we stick together and support one another. His optimism for our country was front and center, along with his desire to work with Congress to do right by the American people.

As the chair of the Senate subcommittee on [Transportation and Infrastructure](#), I paid special attention to the president's remarks about [rebuilding America's infrastructure](#) and how such projects create American jobs, but also can respect our environment. We have a generational opportunity at this moment to rebuild the foundations that make our country work.

As we make these important investments in our future, they need to be grounded in the reality that bridges, roads and pipes – even broadband – are only part of our nation's infrastructure. None of these projects could get moving without the people

who build these systems, maintain them and use them to power our economy. Investing in America's infrastructure cannot be limited to cement and steel.

The [American Families Plan](#), announced by President Biden on Wednesday, further illustrates the strength of his commitment to providing this country a pathway out of the pandemic and moving us toward a stronger future and comprehensive economic recovery.

Putting families at the forefront, the plan makes sure women – [2 million](#) of whom have been forced to leave their jobs during the pandemic – have better resources to help them decide if they stay home or re-enter the workforce. This includes provisions to ensure that low- and middle-income families spend no more than 7 percent of their income on high-quality child care, and \$200 billion to offer [universal preschool to all three- and four-year-olds](#). The president's plan also will ensure that all publicly funded preschools are high-quality, with low student-to-teacher ratios, developmentally appropriate curriculum, and supportive classroom environments that are inclusive for all students.

I am encouraged by other family-friendly policies like a [national paid family and medical leave program](#), the absence of which has placed our country in striking contrast with the rest of the developed world. Extending tax cuts for families with children will make it easier for many American workers to make ends meet. And I welcome provisions that combat childhood hunger, including expanded school meal programs for 9.3 million children and a \$25 billion investment to make permanent demonstration programs that provide [summer meals](#) to all children who qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Some 29 million food-insecure children can benefit from this provision.

I strongly support the plan to provide two years of free community college, as well as other provisions that would [make college more affordable](#) for low- and middle-income students, including those attending HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions. Coupled with the president's call to expand the Pell Grant program to provide up to \$1,400 in additional assistance to low-income students pursuing their higher-education goals and an investment of more than \$60 billion to increase college retention and completion rates, the American Families Plan is poised to make incredible strides toward closing the persistent equity and [achievement gaps](#) in this country.

President Biden is also calling for \$9 billion to train, equip and diversify American educators in order to ensure that our public school students are ready for success. This comes atop significant measures to address [teacher shortages](#) and strengthen the pipelines for teachers of color, while dramatically expanding the mentorship and leadership training opportunities for teachers. These long-overdue investments in the people who shape our children's futures is emblematic of the Biden

administration's overall respect for America's educators, as well as its understanding that education is America's great equalizer.

To emerge from these unprecedented times, we need to invest in our nation and our people in an unprecedented way. We will need to set priorities and negotiate policy differences. We won't be able to tackle everything all at once. But for the sake of our country and the future strength of our economy and our greatest resource – the American people – we need to be bold.

Thank you. Stay safe.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben". The letter "B" is large and stylized, with the "en" written in a cursive script.

Ben Cardin